



## **The Tale of Mister Robert Bob Gray by HolidayFeartree**

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**Summary:** The truest tale of the life of the mysterious Robert Gray from Stephen King's novel "IT."

## The Tale of Mister Robert Bob Gray

At this time, dear readers, we must take a moment to break away from our narrative at hand. Because, at this time, we need to focus on a different narrative to understand the current story, the stories we've read, and the stories we will, *someday*, read.

Pennywise the Dancing Clown came from a story widely known – widely loved. But as it were, the words jumped off the pages of that book and landed in a collection of minds – a hive of thoughts. The named "Robert 'Bob' Gray" became a topic of focus, for so little had been *officially* written about him. The monster took the name, true as gold, and that was the word of God – or rather... that was the word of the monster's creator, Its *author*. Beyond that name, not much else was known about Mister Gray, and certainly nothing else was ever, *or had ever*, been explained.

Bob Gray became the start of a question. "Gray" was a query, a thing of mystery that so many desired to solve. Through readers' own suppositions they did conceive various tales about "Mister Gray" – who he was, what he did, and *how* he became an urban legend.

Mister Gray.

Bob Gray.

Robert Gray.

Each of those whispers, those quandaries, those theories, those amateur fictions... they led to arguments, debates, and essays – but none of them were one hundred percent accurate.

*However...*

None of them were one hundred percent *wrong*, either.

A good story is an amalgam of half stories. Tales pieced together like an epic foil ball, containing only the *most* compelling bits carefully cherry-picked from the bunch.

So this, dear readers, is the actual, true-to-god, story of Mister Robert

"Bob" Gray. Would I lie to you? Me? Your storyteller? Why yes – that's what any good storyteller *would* do. So, as I'd said in the beginning: *If you don't trust me... then stop reading. Are we ready? Let us begin...*

## **The Tale of Mr. Robert "Bob" Gray (better known as) Pennywise the Dancing Clown**

Gray was a man between the age of thirty and thirty-five, and he was a tall man with sandy-brown hair and striking blue eyes. True enough, his hands were large, his fingers long, and his legs put him around six and a half feet tall. He wasn't a *heavy* man, but by no means was he scrawny – not at his height and certainly not at his age.

Gray was indeed an immigrant from Sweden who had, at the ripe age of seventeen, sailed over to the northeasternmost region of the great United States of America. He did *indeed* come over to the land of the free with little else but spare change and a willingness to work – even if it broke his back. Now, understand this... his name wasn't *Bob Gray* back in the old country. No. His birth-given name was *Robert Grå*. Just like that, with the funny circle above it and everything, or so the Americans said. Hell, it meant the *same damn thing* between the languages, but those American types sure relied heavily on everything being spelled out in English. And so... Robert *Gray* it became – or *Bob* if someone was feeling particularly informal.

By his twenties, Bob had made a name for himself in the township of Derry, Maine. In so much that he was the man you'd call on if you'd needed odd jobs done. Some farm work here. Some machinist work there. And every year there'd be a carnival that rolled through Derry, as sure as rain. The event lasted through a long, summer weekend, and when it was over, those carnies packed up that carnival like stuffing socks in a suitcase. You'd better believe Bob Gray was willing to help out with the odd jobs at this event. It was only for a weekend, but the coin was good.

A carnie – a real leathery fella – by the nickname of *Carnie Ron* had been the one who'd personally tasked Bob Gray for the right wages. He'd set Bob to work on various chores like fixing things that went broke and restocking prizes, food, and refreshments as they'd been

consumed (maybe once in awhile *thieved*) throughout the weekend. The downside for Bob was that this carnival only came once a year. A man needed to *live* the rest of those twelve months. Regardless, he took what he could, worked his duties, and collected pay from Carnie Ron.

It wasn't until Bob's third year that things had changed. One of the carnie hands, *not* Ron, asked Mister Gray to fill in as a clown – something to keep the younger kids entertained while their ma's and pa's drank themselves loose on cheap stout (which made them spend *all the more coin* for the rest of the night).

And that's just what Bob did. He put on the clown suit, which was little more than a dingy, old pair of men's pajamas, and caked some white pancake makeup all over his sun-soaked face. Then, Mister Gray took a bit of red paint and gave himself a big, merry smile from ear to ear. He looked just like the Cheshire Cat, if that wicked old cat was ever the clownin' type.

"Hand me all those balloons," Bob had told that same carnie hand, and – boy oh boy – Mister Gray took to being a clown like a duck takes to water. The kids got a dance out of him, silly voices, crazy faces, and each one of them walked away with their own balloon after they'd begged their ma's and pa's (til they were blue in the face, no less) for the extra coin to buy their very own from the clown. Why, Bob even took a paintbrush to the balloons and signed each one of them, like he'd been peddling out his very own autograph. (As if he'd been *anything* to *anyone* at the time, but for that measly hour, to *those* kids, Mister Bob Gray was like a *god*.) Before he'd signed his first balloon, Bob had to think of a name on the fly. He saw those coins jingling in the youngsters' hands and it just came to him: *Pennywise*. Pennywise the clown. The clown that danced, even sang a tune or three, and handed off balloons with his signature and everything.

It wasn't long after that day that Bob Gray got to thinking that he could do this for a living. He could entertain, sing, dance, and overcharge for cheap balloons. (And he could do it more than *once* per year!) So, with the money he'd saved thus far, Mister Gray bought an old, worn down caravan off Carnie Ron. He'd fixed her up and painted a likeness of his clownin' self across her side. Then he wrote

the words, as big and as grand as he could: ***The Great Pennywise – The Dancing Clown***. And, sure enough, that had been Mister Bob Gray's modest source of income for years to come.

What Bob Gray *hadn't* known was ...that in all that time... he was being *watched*. (And interestingly enough, he'd been watched by two very *different* sets of eyes.)

The first, and prettiest, set of eyes that'd been watching Mister Gray from afar belonged to Miss Melody Sharp. She was a provocative young woman with a lean build and a face that could charm the skin off a snake. Her hair was thick and golden and often prettily decorated with some ribbons or another. Her eyes were deep and beautiful, like a pair of sparkling sapphires. One look from her and it could melt any man's heart. (Well... *almost* any man's.) It was true. Miss Melody was a lovely thing, and even lovelier was her soul. She'd help just about any person in need, no questions asked. Miss Sharp was a kind girl with a gentle touch and a soothing voice. Why, her tone was so pacifying that her own birth-given name didn't do it justice. Yes, just about any man in the Derry township could agree that listening to Miss Melody Sharp speak was like being serenaded by a warm, beautiful song.

Now... don't ask me why... but poor Melody, for some unholy reason, had her sweet heart set on Mister Bob Gray. One could theorize that she took to him because he'd been so *engaging* in his performances. Perhaps he amused her which had, in some way, *bewitched* the sweet girl. One could also argue that she took to him because, admittedly, Mister Gray *was* a handsome man with those unconventionally attractive Scandinavian looks. Oh sure – he was tall and strong and his eyes were piercing blue. So blue, in fact, you could swear that god himself plucked two pieces of the sky and stuffed them right in Gray's sockets on the day he'd come squalling into the world.

So, without a doubt, Miss Melody Sharp had fallen for Mister Bob Gray. Unfortunately – because life just isn't fair, even if you *are* as darling and as elegant as Miss Sharp – the man could have cared less. She came around after his shows while he'd been winding down back behind the caravan, and it was always the same sad story.

"Evening, Robert!" she'd say with the prettiest smile. "I baked you a

shepherd's pie." And little Melody would approach Mister Gray, often times while he was still in his clown makeup, offering the man some *painstakingly* handmade gift or another. Poor thing. She went a-courtin' after Bob, day in and day out, never quite getting the hint that he was dead set on remaining a lifelong bachelor.

"Thank you, Miss Melody," he'd always say, without so much as looking at her. His tone was often quiet, unimpressed, perhaps with a hint of eagerness for her to *just go away*. Now, there was nothing actually *wrong* with Mister Gray. Nothing criminal about him. He simply wasn't interested. Some folk balked at his persistent indifference to Miss Sharp, and that's how rumors circulated, but – true as gold – Bob only cared about Bob.

Melody didn't see this for what it was. She persisted in her own way, in spite of his antipathy. "There's a dance at the local hall coming up..." That was her usual line when that time of year came around. "Gee, I'd hate to go alone..."

But of course, Bob Gray, with that thick head of sandy hair sitting on that prominent forehead of his would look down at the hopeful, young woman, clear his throat, and say, "I'm sure you'll manage." Then he'd turn right back around and stare into that mirror of his as he wiped his makeup from his skin.

Melody had taken Bob for a coy man, which was part of her whole denial over the issue. In spite of his day to day vocation, she was convinced he was *shy*. And that was the long and short of their *relationship*, if you had the cheek to call it such a thing.

Then... there had been the *other* set of eyes watching Bob Gray. These eyes were much different from those of Melody Sharp. These had been the devil's eyes. Eyes from another place – a dark place – not anywhere bright enough to be considered another *world*. It was like an *unworld*. A void. Nowhere that any man or woman would willingly go. Perhaps it'd been a place that led straight to hell for all one knew. Hell or death. Or perhaps both.

What is known about the Derry township is that a great evil thrived somewhere at its core. This was an unfortunate truth, one that no citizen wanted to advertise, but a truth with which every citizen was

all too familiar. Some said the town was cursed. Others said that the *evil* bore the town, itself. There was no true agreement on the matter, but, true enough, it had been the same evil that plagued Derry in its later years to come. It was the same evil that eventually caused the Ironworks Factory explosion, the same evil that burned down the Black Spot. Hell, it was the same evil that skyrocketed both the citywide death toll and the headcount of missing children at an alarming rate. This evil... It had a *mind*. It was conscious. It was self aware. And, regrettably, It took notice of Mister Robert Gray.

For a brief time, It merely *watched* him. It studied everything about Gray – his daily routine, his habits, his apparel, and his performances. It *took* to him, you see. It took to his likeness. In a way, It envied Gray – how easily he drew in crowds of people. *Gray* simply saw them as potential meal tickets... easy coin.

But It...

It saw them as potential *meals*. Plain and simple.

Bob Gray hadn't been too difficult to drive to madness. No sir. All it took were some whispers in his mind, driving his thoughts to dark places, forcing the man to slowly become unhinged. Gray had begun to question his sanity the night he'd seen himself eat a boy. The creature – It – took to shapeshifting into the very spitting image of Bob Gray. It had strut around, looking exactly like him, right before his eyes, causing the man's mind to snap faster than a stale twig.

"I'm *you*, Bob!" It had said, dragging around the half dead body of a bleeding and terrified boy. That *same* boy had earlier been part of the paying crowd that gathered to see Gray's dancing clown performance. Gray screamed, night after night, watching a nightmarish facsimile of himself gruesomely eat away at the flesh and bone of one horrified patron or another.

Tragically, Bob Gray – the man – had become convinced that he, himself, *was* the killer. Such a thing wasn't true, but try telling that poor son of a bitch that after the terrors he'd been forced to see. Becoming *unhinged* didn't take long. No sir. Gray's grip on reality had long since slipped clean away and he couldn't live with himself any further. After two weeks of watching *the other Bob Gray*, Mister Gray



fastened a rope up to the branch of a tall tree, secured it snugly around his neck, and promptly took his own life.

The creature... It was delighted. With the real man out of the picture, It was able to take over his appearance, his caravan, and his dancing clown routine. It took over his life. *It* was the new Mister Robert "Bob" Gray, now. It continued to feed off the patrons who came to see Pennywise do his dance – oh yes – like shooting fish in a barrel. Easy meals – and these types scared real easy, too. *It* ...Gray... made their meat *jump* with flavor.

The creature went by Bob's name, who frequently introduced *himself* as Pennywise, just as his muse (now swinging from a tree) had done. Nothing seemed to be standing in his way to endless meals. No more hunting and starving. No more worrying that he couldn't fill his belly before his long sleep. The whole setup was about as convenient as running a farm.

One day, however, after a few weeks of this delicious *convenience*, Miss Melody Sharp – oblivious and as innocent as pie – went calling on Mister Bob Gray just as she'd *always* been apt to do. Melody circled the caravan, peeking around for him, but found that, as it were, he didn't appear to be home. The caravan was, indeed, the man's home. She knew this well. He wasn't the type to stray too far from it for too long. However... without warning – without even a *sound* – Melody almost jumped out of her own skin when she turned to see Bob Gray just standing mere inches from her, as if he'd noiselessly appeared from thin air!

"Robert!" she'd yelled, raising a hand to her heaving chest. "You startled me half to death. That wasn't very kind, sir." She chuckled a bit, for there was a part of Melody who had been *amused* by her own shock, and so her chuckle turned into a laugh. Composing herself, she then beamed a warm smile to the tall man staring her down with intense eyes; a man who sported a grin that didn't seem to sit quite right on his comely face. It looked like the smile of the *clown*, as if it had been glued, indefinitely, to Gray's lips. It did, indeed, give Melody pause before she continued. "I..." the young woman stammered, "*I made* you something."

He stared her up and down – she was dressed in a frilly, sky blue

dress with white trim. It was warm that day, so her hair was done up in some fancy knotwork to which only pretty girls like Melody knew the secret method. Gray found her... *appealing*. Just that brief bounce of shock had sent an appetizing aroma to his sensitive nose – like fresh meat simmering in a spicy stew.

Melody handed him a box. It had been conscientiously gift-wrapped, almost too perfect to tear open. "Go on," she smiled.

Without a word, Gray nimbly untied the white ribbon around the box, then ripped at the shiny, red paper, peeling it away from the parcel. The box was a simple paper cube, likely something she'd found in her attic. Melody's smile widened as she blushed a little. "Open it up, Robert."

Gray popped and flipped open the paper flap and looked down. Inside, there was some sort of ivory fabric, pleated and lacy, made from some fancy material or another.

"Here," huffed Melody, too excited to wait for him to take it out. "Let me." Miss Sharp removed the item and draped it around Gray's neck. "See?" Ruffs. She'd sewn together custom-made, Elizabethan neck ruffs for the man's Pennywise costume. "I hope you *like* it." Still smiling and blushing, she awkwardly looked down.

Gray, he ...*It*... had never been *given* a gift before. Certainly nothing intended for the indulgence of his (Its) own *vanity*. He reached to the back of his neck and fastened the ruffs together, spying himself in one of the makeup mirrors. The ruffs, indeed, *looked good*. And because Gray *looked* good, he felt a multitude of *good feelings* wash over him in that instant. He turned to Miss Melody, clutched her delicate hand, stared into her eyes, and said, "Thank you, Miss Sharp. This is a *beautiful* gift."

Melody's blushing cheeks reddened even more. "Will you wear it to your next show?" she'd asked. Some part of her expected Robert to tell her *no*, rip off the ruffs, stuff them back in that box, and send her on her way.

"Oh yes, Miss Sharp. *Melody*. Yes I will wear it. I will wear it to every show." He held her hands a bit tighter, now. Just a squeeze. Then, he

let her go.

Melody's heart nearly melted. Meanwhile, Gray excused himself, but unlike in the past, he did so warmly, with a tone that seemed to say, "*Oh Melody... please do come visit me again...*"

And so... she did. Miss Sharp, bless her innocent heart, did not realize the man called *Robert Gray* – to whom she'd devoted the remainder of her free time on Earth – was truly not the same man as the one that snubbed her again and again. No. She visited nightly with a *foul* thing. A skinwalker that had been asleep for billions of years, only having recently awoken within the last few hundred. Thereafter, It followed a sleep cycle of twenty-seven years only to emerge, hunt, and eat on the flesh of Derry folk, before returning to Its rest.

Melody was none the wiser, but she sure was *tickled* to see Mister Bob Gray hungrily wolf down her shepherd's pie for once in her life. She wondered... did his feelings change for her? Had Robert finally warmed up to her advances? And oh how he wore her hand sewn neck ruffs! Each time she caught his act, he'd faithfully had them wrapped round his *oh-so-handsome* collarbone. Melody was elated. Robert had *finally* taken to her.

Now, this is the point in our tale, dear reader, where one might think this wicked creature had depraved plans for the likes of poor Miss Melody Sharp. Did the thought cross Gray's mind to plunge the delicate young maiden into her deepest fears and then proceed to eat her alive? Oh yes! This thought *did indeed* cross Gray's mind – and more than once, *assuredly*.

But...

Melody had a *certain something* about her. Even all the Derry men could agree on that. Perhaps even some of the Derry women, if you can open up your mind and wrap your head around such a thing. Sure enough, that *certain something*, that unconditionally *giving* nature of Melody's, well... it was powerful enough to transcend barriers even of the dark, extradimensional kind. People like Miss Sharp don't come around all too often. This dark tale goes to show just how much of a rarity she'd been. Perhaps her *certain something* failed on the *real* Robert Gray, but... on the likes of this entity... on this creature... it

sure hadn't failed in the least. Gray's ability to probe deep into Miss Sharp's psyche and read her every whim had, unbeknownst to her, enchanted a monster. Not an easy feat to do. Sometimes it was what was on the *inside* that counted... and in this case, it counted for one's very life.

Gray complimented Melody's shepherd's pie each and every time she'd brought it around, singing the utmost praise to its delicious texture and taste. The animal meat within had been seasoned *just right*, almost enough to rival the scared, savory flesh of a quivering child.

"They say the quickest way to a man's heart is through his stomach," Miss Sharp would laugh.

Gray laughed along with her, oh how he *laughed and laughed*. Sort of a haunting giggle, really, but Melody cheerfully paid no mind.

One night, Miss Sharp came to Gray, very nervous, hoping to ask him the same question she'd asked each year. The dance. She wanted him to accompany her to the dance at the local hall where *all* of the township would surely be in attendance.

"Will you do me the honor?" she'd asked. "I know, I know. I ask *every* year, but—"

"What about now?" said Gray.

Melody quirked a half smile. "N-now?"

Gray took her small hand in his, cupping his other hand to her slender waist. "Would you kindly dance with me *now* Melody Sharp? Out here? Under the moonlight?"

On cue, her cheeks flushed and she smiled. "Of course, Mister Gray." Miss Sharp couldn't believe it – she had won this man's heart.

Gray pulled her close, swaying gently, leading Melody along with his graceful strides. He rested his chin on the curve of her head as she felt the soothing heave of his chest against her face. For some time their quiet waltz continued, silently but beautifully, beneath the glow of the moon above, until Gray lifted her innocent face to meet his

eyes. He leaned downward and gently kissed the young woman on her velvet, soft lips. She tasted as he'd imagined – sweet and fresh. Gray found himself unable to unlock his mouth from hers. Melody pressed against him in her own, eager way – meanwhile her small but firm hands cupped the rugged contours of his jawbone and neck.

Gray lifted Melody from her feet, still embracing, forever trapped in the perfect kiss. And the two eventually found themselves back inside his caravan, clothing off, making love on a bed roll stuffed with down. Melody had never lain with a man in all her life – and as far as Gray knew, she was assuredly his (Its) *first*, as well. Their lovemaking was raw, but slow, bathed in a soft light provided by a neighboring kerosene lamp.

Gray had hunted the humans... had fed on the humans... but *this*...

"I love you," Melody Sharp had whispered against his lips, now wet from her kisses.

It had been a phrase the humans said to each other when their affections had... *blossomed*. Gray, for all his evil and wickedness, could only hear himself utter those same words back to her.

"I love you too..." Even though this *monster* had spent centuries playing deadly tricks on people, this was indeed no ruse. The creature that had driven Bob Gray to suicide, stole his life away, and murdered those who paid to see him dance, deeply felt *love* – of all things – for Miss Melody Sharp.

And as she moaned and panted against Gray as he bucked his hips into her, he resolved to himself that while almost all humans were potential *meat* – Melody Sharp certainly was *not*.

Time went on and the two continued their trysts, but as all stories have a beginning, there must come the inevitable end. Whether Melody Sharp knew it or not – she'd trapped the heart of a monster. Not a small victory, which undeniably makes her the hero of this tale. In spite of how everything shall boil down in the end, Melody Sharp was the one who had *saved* the monster inside of Mister Robert "Bob" Gray.

Now, Gray, for all that he (It) was... had been a cloud of malevolence cast over Derry. Perhaps, Melody did not perish by the wicked creature's hand in of itself – Its influence was still the death of her. Gray's corruption spread like a disease through the hearts of Derry residents far and wide. Murder. Rape. Arson. All accounts of such heinous deeds increased in frequency, namely when the creature's eyes were open.

Gray waited for Melody that night, as he always had each and every night. How he missed her when she was away. But Miss Melody never came to the caravan that night. She'd taken her usual walking path – oh yes – but this time some men had been waiting for the poor girl. They'd been watching Miss Sharp, memorizing her routine over the course of some time. These men knew that the young lady had coin on her and they were, unfortunately, the desperate criminal types in a rush to leave the great state of Maine. Now, be aware they *didn't* violate Miss Melody – no they did not. As previously stated, they were in a rush. The thoughts *had* crossed their ugly minds, sure, but the *coin* was all they wanted. Truth be told, had Melody handed over her purse, then everyone would've walked away in one piece. But Miss Sharp, deep in her gracious heart, was a hero – she was a fighter. And, bless her efforts, she tried to fight off those men, but she lost that battle. She lost it hard.

In fact, it had been in that very moment when one of the men – whose eyes Melody had nearly clawed from his face – stuck his knife deep in her belly that Gray looked up at the moon above and gasped in sync with Miss Sharp's final breath. Those awful men ran off with her coin – they even took her shepherd's pie. All the while, Gray raced across the Derry landscape, moving faster than any mortal man could do. Though he hadn't moved fast enough and, in the end, he found his love lying flat on the wet earth, bleeding red through the center of that sky blue dress of hers.

Gray took Melody in his arms and shushed her as she choked. Blood bubbled from the corners of her mouth and he held her closer, knowing all too well when a human's death was near.

"R – Robert..." she'd managed to say.

"I'm here," he croaked in reply, his once smooth voice changing under

the duress of watching her die. As Melody's life slipped away, all the affection Gray had for her sunk downward, deep into a forgotten place where he locked away his (Its) sensitivities. Gray's affection was replaced with a heavy layer of malice and hatred for Derry. Hatred for the humans. Hatred for their children. Oh how... *how*... he would make them suffer. Make them scream. Make them into his food forever and always. They took her from him. Miss Sharp could have been the one to quell his urgency to always *consume* – but not anymore.

Gray hugged Melody's limp, delicate body close and rocked her. He shuddered with grief so fiercely that he began to lose his form. Tendrils inched out from his spine as he arched forward, cradling his love. But... deep down... that affection still lingered. It was still there... somewhere... buried within a monster who wept into the night. Melody Sharp may have died, but her long lasting impression on Mister Robert "Bob" Gray never did.